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Being Able to Say "I Don't Know"

In the November Director's Report I told you about the mistake we made when we scheduled a Reducing Health Disparities event on the eve of a Jewish holiday. Recently I had a meeting with a number of concerned staff to talk about where we went wrong and how we can avoid similar problems in the future.

I want to thank each person who entered into the conversation, particularly those who reflected back how it felt to be on the receiving end of the mistake. This was not a comfortable conversation, but it was a productive one. I appreciate the courage and determination of everyone involved as we work both as individuals and as an organization to heighten our sensitivity and awareness.

I'm sure this was not the first time we have scheduled an event on a day that conflicted with a significant religious or cultural holiday. When incidents like this occur, I am reminded how easy it is to fall back into defensiveness. We all have a tendency, at times, to point to past progress or good intentions held. The first challenge in these situations is being able to hear what is being said and to acknowledge a mistake. None of us can know everything there is to know about a culture different from our own. Once we can accept that we can't know everything, it's much easier to take the next challenge and ask to be taught. I have come to appreciate difficult situations for the learning opportunities they really are. When I can hear what's being said and when I can enter into conversation, I learn so much about the rich cultural traditions that serve as the foundations of our families and our communities.

What We're Doing

An immediate result of this most recent conversation will be to post a master calendar on our Intranet with significant dates of many different cultures and religions. Once it is posted I will expect anyone scheduling a major event to refer to it so that future scheduling conflicts can be avoided.

I want to acknowledge some other ways our programs and divisions are working to be more culturally aware and inclusive. Throughout December our Health Plan distributed all staff emails about the many holidays taking place , including Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, Las Posadas and the Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, to name a few. "Cultural diversity does not mean the loss of importance of your own culture. It means celebrating everyone's cultures and celebrating the variety and spice that culture adds to life," said CCHP's message.



— Dr. Walker

Our Own Filters

The broader message is that we can't know everything and we often do not know what we don't know. We can be aware that we all see the world through our own cultural and historical filters. This can apply to many things – from when we schedule meetings to how we view and talk with each other and our patients and clients.

I'm often challenged to ask questions when I see my own patients, who represent a wide variety of cultures. Recently I spent the night in the intensive care unit with an Afghani patient who was being taken off a ventilator. At the moment of death there was a scramble of relatives around my patient to

Continued next page

DID YOU KNOW

There have been approximately
11,746 flu shots given in our
Health Centers and Public
Health clinics this year.

Director's Message Continued...

find a piece of cloth to quickly tie the patient's mouth shut to symbolize that the end had arrived. I learned this custom was very important to the spiritual beliefs of the patient and her family. I didn't know about this practice, even though many of my patients over the years have been members of the Afghani community.

Developing Skills

To help gain some of the skills we need to deal with these kind of challenges, this month as part of the Reducing Health Disparities Initiative, we begin piloting training for all Health Services managers and supervisors. One of the goals of this effort is to develop the awareness and refine the skills we need to ask questions and to realize that not everyone sees the world through the same lenses. This training is an important beginning and I will be looking forward to hearing feedback from the participants and sharing my own. I will be a participant.

During this new phase of the RHD, it is important for us to practice what one of the participants in the Jewish holiday discussion said: This is not about catching people making mistakes or blaming them. It's about what we do when we make cultural blunders and how we talk about it afterwards. It's about being able to say "I don't know" and asking for help from co-workers and from patients and families.

I know the way ahead won't always be easy or comfortable, but it's what we need to do. In our African American Health Initiative Planning Group, we've talked a lot about racism and how we can reduce the disparities that result from the history of racism in our country. It's a painful subject and we are only beginning to learn how to have these uncomfortable conversations. But I know it's possible to learn from them and to build more effective working relationships as a result.

We are certainly not alone in grappling with these issues. At a recent conference I attended, one of the speakers pointed out there has never been a location in the history of civilization with the amount of diversity and the size of California. It's a brand new experience for everyone.

Sincerely,



William Walker, MD

It is with great sadness that I share with you the heartbreaking news about the death, on November 21, of my stepson Matthew Baty. Matthew, who would have been 29 this January, was my wife Holly's oldest son. As our family struggles to deal with the tragic loss of Matthew, we have appreciated the many cards and calls offering support received from so many of you – our county "family." Your thoughts and prayers support us as we walk through this most difficult of times. Words cannot begin to express how deeply touched we are by the outpouring of love, care and support offered. Thank you for your thoughtfulness.
— WW

Fetal Infant Mortality Program Issues Findings, Accomplishments

The Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Program recently released a report titled *Contra Costa Fetal Infant Mortality Review Program, Findings and Accomplishments, 1998 - 2004*. The FIMR Program is a community-based process designed to investigate factors associated with fetal and infant death on a local level and to improve how community resources and service delivery systems respond to the needs of families. The purpose of the new report is to share the FIMR Program's findings and contributions in addressing fetal and infant mortality from the program's inception in 1998 through 2004. The report presents local data on fetal and infant mortality, findings and recommendations from FIMR's case review process, and projects and interventions implemented in response to case review recommendations. It documents that every year between 1993 and 2003 except one, Contra Costa's infant mortality rate was lower than the state's overall, and that starting in 2001, the county's rate has been below our Healthy People 2010 objective of 4.5 deaths for every 1,000 live births.

 The report can be accessed online at: cchealth.org/services by clicking on FIMR. More information is available from Kristina Kutter, FIMR Project Coordinator, at kkutter@hds.co.contra-costa.ca.us or 925-313-6355.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Wendy Jo Cervantes

Community Health Outreach Worker
Healthy Neighborhoods Project

For conducting door-to-door outreach in the Bay Point Community, which resulted in more than 100 residents attending a community meeting to learn more about the Industrial Safety Ordinance, the Community Warning System and other hazardous materials and environmental health issues.

—Nominated by Randy Sawyer

Theo Durden, LMFT

West County Children's Mental Health Clinic

For his great attitude and dedication. He is always available on Friday to do Intake, checks his voicemail and follows through on his calls.

—Nominated by Derrell McKinney

Patricia Erickson, RN

Child Health and Disability Prevention Program

For her strong determination in helping the Hispanic Community in East County and especially for recognizing the increasing number of child obesity cases in East Contra Costa.

—Nominated by Diana Bello

Shawn Eyer and Dan Smith

Community Education and Information

For bringing to reality the community's suggestion of a comic book to educate residents about the Industrial Safety Ordinance.

—Nominated by Randy Sawyer

Dr. Cynthia Savage

Bay Point Family Health Center

For always being so caring and concerned with her patients, and treating each patient on an individual basis. She is friendly, positive, easy to talk to, and always takes the time to listen.

—Nominated by Ofelia Dimas and Martha Flores

Do you know someone who's going the extra mile?

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the "Going the Extra Mile" commendation form, available from every CCHS Division Director, or email your commendation to ServiceEX@hdsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us or fax it to 925-313-6219. The form can also be downloaded from the Internet (About Us page) or Intranet.

Employee Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Mireya Diaz, Nora Lopez, Ronald Navarra, Swarnalatha Srinivasan, Gerald Tamayo, Brenda Dauphin, Arlene Williams (10 years); George Khoury, Keith White, Jami Augustine, Mary Morgan, Maria E. Sanchez, Jane Yimbo, Jenny Wong (15 years); Rhonda Clancy, Irma Lerma, John Light, Debra Sell, Marielena Knutson, Arthur Lathrop, Karen Moghtader (20 years); Paul Gilbert, Craig Smith, Sengkham Nompraseurt, Linda Whittington, Ruby Palmer (25 years); and William Walker (30 years). *(We know there are lots of other dedicated employees with long years of service. Because of space limitations, we are only reporting those with 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years.)*

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the February edition is January 13. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Julie Freestone at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: jfreestone@hdsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us. The Director's Report is available online at cchealth.org and on the Intranet at cchs.

This page brings news of how the implementation of the CCHS Plan for Reducing Health Disparities is progressing. Our divisions have been working on three key areas: to improving linguistic access, implementing educational activities on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence, and developing an organizational climate that values patient, customer and employee diversity.

Personnel Uses Training and Recognition to Help Reduce Health Disparities



Left to right; Dorette McCollum, Shelley Pighin and Frances Trant.

Our Personnel Services Division has developed its own harassment prevention training for employees and is using Service Excellence awards to recognize staff as part of its efforts to help reduce health disparities. Personnel Director Shelley Pighin said the role of the Personnel Division is to assist managers in hiring competent staff who support our mission and are trained to understand our expectations. Personnel Analyst Frances Trant tailored state-mandated sexual harassment and anti-discrimination training to fit CCHS' mission

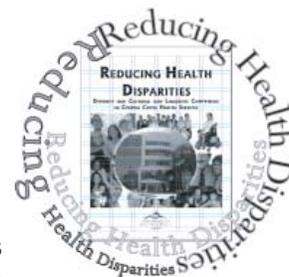
and created "Harassment Prevention Training" for employees. The training focuses on education and helping employees understand that everyone is responsible for preventing harassment, Frances said. She created a more in-depth version for management staff, emphasizing supervisors' responsibility to stop and prevent harassment by educating employees and creating an environment that encourages everyone to learn about their colleagues' cultures. This helps staff work better together and also better serves our clients. "It's part of making sure we have a culturally sensitive workplace. People need to take the time to understand other cultures and not assume they know already," Frances said. Since the training was rolled out in April, more than 1,000 employees have gone through the course. Frances also helped develop and organize peer-delivered cultural sensitivity trainings for charge nurses and Nurse Program Managers from January to June at CCRMC. The charge nurses, who serve as shift supervisors, created and presented monthly workshops for staff to gain a better understanding of their co-workers' different cultures. This in turn helps them work together and care for diverse patients more effectively, Frances said. Personnel also uses our Service Excellence award, which honors employees who demonstrate an extra effort, to encourage staff to be respectful and responsive to each other, said Personnel Analyst Dorette McCollum. "The idea is if we respect each other, that respect also will spill over into how we treat the people we serve," Dorette said.

 For more information about Personnel's RHDl efforts, contact Frances Trant at frant@hds.co.contra-costa.ca.us or 925-947-5245.

RHDl Training Being Developed for Managers and Supervisors

Last summer, the California Endowment awarded CCHS a \$125,000 grant to develop health disparity and diversity training for management staff. Our Reducing Health Disparities Education Committee, along with Initiative Leader José Martín, created a draft curriculum that has been refined with the help of two consultants. CCHS Personnel Analyst Frances Trant and 15 other managers will eventually be conducting the training, after it is pilot tested starting this month with managers and supervisors from our Public Health and Health Plan divisions. Using feedback from PH and CCHP, the curriculum will be modified and then tested again with managers from Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services and CCRMC and the health centers. The training focuses on health disparities, cross-cultural communication, linguistic access and creating an organizational climate that values diversity. The goal is to have the final version of the training completed by June. Los Angeles County is developing disparities training for providers and San Francisco County is doing the same for community-based organizations. Once completed, all three trainings will be available to public health systems statewide.

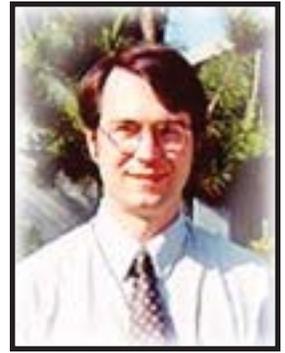
 For more information regarding this training, contact José Martín at jmartin@hds.co.contra-costa.ca.us or 925-957-5426.



This month concludes our series in the Reducing Health Disparities Initiative page on goals and accomplishments in various Divisions. In February, we will start focusing on disparities for specific health issues.

Pittsburg Physician Sees, Hears of Katrina's Devastation

"It was sort of amazing to see how much damage there was in New Orleans," said Dr. Chris Farnitano upon his return in November from two weeks of doing disaster relief for the Public Health Service. "We were setting up primary care clinics, doing a lot of vaccinations, and treating a lot of acute illnesses like asthma and allergies," he said. A family physician at our Pittsburg Health Center, Chris spent the first week in a FEMA tent city in Baton Rouge, then moved into the third floor patient ward of the Methodist Hospital in eastern New Orleans. Plumbing and ventilation were not working in the hospital, rendering it unfit for patient care. "They were working to try and fix up the hospital, but there was so much damage. I guess it's going to take about a year." As a member of one of eight Mobile Primary Care Teams, Chris traveled around Louisiana working in mobile home parks and temporary shelters. "There was a lot of depression and anxiety, people trying to get along with their lives in the wake of a disaster ... Everybody had an amazing story of surviving the flood, getting rescued off of rooftops. So, we did a lot of just listening to stories." We can be proud of the numerous CCHS employees, like Chris, who are lending their assistance to people in need.



Dr. Chris Farnitano

CDC Grant to Fund Empowerment Through Action

Our TeenAge Program (TAP) and Tobacco Prevention Project have received a \$161,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Foundation. More than 300 proposals were submitted from around the country competing for a total of \$868,500 in grants intended to help prevent smoking and tobacco use by urban youths. Ours is one of only six grants given by the program, which stems from a settlement with two tobacco companies that allegedly violated the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement by marketing tobacco to youth through advertisements using Hip Hop music, dance and art. The grant is being used to support TAP's Empowerment Through Action project at Middle College High School in San Pablo. The teen advocates are working to define the tobacco problem in West Contra Costa County and work with community leaders to create change. The teens made a presentation last month to the Richmond City Council in support of mandatory licensing for tobacco retailers. After hearing testimony from members of ETA, the Council directed the city attorney to draft an ordinance that would require tobacco merchants to be licensed.



For more information contact Ahna Suleiman, manager of the TeenAge Program, at asuleiman@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us or 925-313-6189.

Diabetes Registry Improves Patient Care

A clinical team at the Richmond Health Center (RHC) is celebrating successful completion of a one year Diabetes Improvement Project as part of a statewide Chronic Care Collaborative. Members of the team include Arinna Hollander RD, Terry Holbrook FNP, Cecilia Ramirez, and Drs. Troy Kaji and Kate Colwell. The team participated along with other public clinics organized by the California Association of Public Hospitals. Using the new Diabetes Registry to find patients who needed more testing or increased treatment, the team worked on improving the care provided to 124 diabetic patients at RHC. Innovations included handheld cards for patients to keep track of their care, diabetes self-management classes, planned visits for chronic care patients, standing orders for diabetes care and new diabetic prescriptions. After a year, the Registry shows the patients are being tested more often, more are receiving pneumonia vaccinations, fewer are smoking, and results for blood pressure and diabetes and cholesterol control have all improved. Additionally, 70% of the patients have set self-care goals for themselves. This year, a new team will begin working at Pittsburg Health Center while this team will continue to spread the successful innovations to other practices at RHC and North Richmond Center for Health.



Email Dr. Kate Colwell at kcolwell@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us for more information.

Emergency Preparedness Film Festival January 19

Do you need to know about avian flu or West Nile Virus? Are you prepared for a major earthquake? What are “dirty bombs” and weapons of mass destruction? Did you know that all public employees are disaster service workers? The Emergency Preparedness Film Festival sponsored by our Public Health Division will feature videos on these topics. Staff is invited to drop in on the “festival” anytime between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Thursday, January 19 at 597 Center Ave., Suite 200, in Martinez.



For more information about the film festival, type cchs in your browser to access the Intranet.

Promotoras Winning Grants, Making News

Our crew of six Promotoras working out of Bay Point Family Health Center have a new charge thanks to a grant from Kaiser Community Grants Program. The \$20,000 grant builds on the Latina group’s work in the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Initiative program, in which they have been teaching six-to eight-week classes on the health benefits of decreased TV viewing. When delivering this message to diabetes patients, they will also now be offering similar courses in diabetes self-management, teaching skills like taking frequent glucose readings and good care of feet. While these efforts are taking place throughout much of East and Central Contra Costa, a report is also being compiled currently based on the Promotoras contacts with more than 200 pregnant East County women. All this good work has not gone unnoticed either. The Promotoras were the subject October 21 of a terrific news story with photos in the Ledger Dispatch newspaper.



For more information call the lead Promotora, Angelica Matamoros, at 925-427-8339.

Haz Mat and Public Health Team Up to Reach Residents

More than 100 Bay Point residents participated in a recent town hall meeting — the first of its kind here to be conducted entirely in Spanish — to learn about and give feedback to us about the Industrial Safety Ordinance (ISO) and other emergency issues. The meeting was the result of several months of extensive collaboration between neighborhood residents and staff in our Hazardous Materials Programs and the Public Health Division’s Healthy Neighborhoods Project (HNP). To begin with, residents in the HNP Bay Point Latina Action Team received basic environmental justice training and then decided to work on understanding and improving the county’s Community Warning System. Team members made presentations to prevention groups at local schools on shelter-in-place, participated in a Contra Costa TV program showcasing resident involvement, and helped plan and recruit residents to attend the town hall. Staff developed a presentation to make the complex ISO program understandable and relevant for residents, and residents were very engaged in the dialogue. The HNP Action Team is now developing specific recommendations for how the Hazardous Materials Programs can incorporate ongoing resident engagement as part of future planning and education efforts.



Bay Point residents hear about Industrial Safety Ordinance.



For more information, contact Roxanne Carrillo at 925-313-6810 or Randy Sawyer at 925-646-2879.

Spread the Word: Free Tax Filing Help

Low-income families and individuals can get help filing their income tax returns until April through the “Earn It! Keep It! Save It!” project. The project is a collaboration that includes Health Services, Employment and Human Services, United Way, First Five Contra Costa and other organizations. Fliers are available to let residents know about the program by calling Fowzia Younos at 925-313-6823 and at cchealth.org online.